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Riding sober and free: Qualitative study of sober motorcycle clubs

by

Tammie J. Foltz

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (Social Sciences)

Program of Study Committee:
Martin Miller, Major Professor
Robert Hollinger
Dan Robinson

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2003

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Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the master's thesis of

TAMMIE J. FOLTZ

has met the thesis requirement of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and children who watched me put this off to the bitter end. Thank you for being so patient with me. This thesis is also dedicated to Marty Miller and Bob Hollinger for helping me achieve my dream. Last but not least I thank God and Bill W. for my life and opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The columns of bikes race down the highway in formation. Passing cars in unison the line of bikes move in a metal ballet, oblivious to cars and pedestrians they pass. Men driving as women relax behind. Their bikes are loaded with sleeping bags and tents. They are on their way to a camp out. Where other people, like them, will spend a weekend in bike races, dances, and fireside meetings. Dress code for bikers is leather, jeans, crop tops, no tops but most of the apparel is functional for riding on a motorcycle. Everyone a rebel but all looking alike. From the outside they look dangerous but everyone one at this camp out is sober. Not a drug or drop of alcohol is allowed in the camp out grounds. See Figure 3.

This group of individuals is commonly referred to as bikers. Whether the person rides only on the weekends or year round they make up distinct part of society with distinct attitudes and patterns of living. Bikers stand out and a mythical genre has developed around them. Their motorcycles are extensions of their personalities detailed with designs and symbols describing who they are.

Bikers normally ride only Harley's or British bikes. Japanese bikes are not really considered motorcycles and bikers would never ride one. Furthermore at many biker events they have a smash a Jap bike as entertainment. "There is no entry into the outlaw biker fraternity for those who ride anything else, particularly 'Jap crap.'" (Wolf, 1991 p.37)

So who rides a Harley? "The people who create their identities around their bikes, and the ones who behave in predictable ways when they ride." (Joans, 2001 p.62)

Owning the bike, riding the bike and socializing with other bikers become the identity of the individual. The person riding for the first time will learn the conformity of what it is to be a biker by watching the established riders. This identity becomes a part of

who they are. The biker identity crosses socioeconomic class lines with sales in Harleys increasing every year. (Reynolds, 2000)

In fact women are starting to ride in record numbers and share their collective experience with each other. (Ferrar, 1996, Lopez, 1997) This has changed the motorcycle culture landscape by the variety of people riding.

Furthermore riding bikes is done either solo or with others riding in groups. However there are many different types of riding groups from the all-inclusive open riding clubs like the Harley Owners Group to the closed membership only clubs, which are called patched clubs.

Patched clubs or biker clubs have specific membership requirements with an initiation period to earn the patch. The patch is an embroidered symbol that usually represents the club name. This is worn on the back of a vest to distinguish the riders from other clubs. One percent clubs have a territory bottom patch which explains what part of the country that person is from. They also have an MC patch, which stands for motorcycle club. The two clubs in this study also have these patches on their vests. See Figure 1.

As a result of more people riding society has relaxed its dislike of motorcycle clubs since the sixties but there is still an underlying distrust of bikers especially among law enforcement.

In this paper this researcher will discuss the research of two motorcycle groups and will attempt to lift the veil to reveal the underlying motivations for joining the culture and maintaining that relationship with the culture. This will be accomplished by using the participants own words to describe their lived experience. Topics that will be discussed will be club membership requirements, prospecting or initiation process, motorcycling as choice

and outsiders or out-group members. In the conclusion theory will be discussed about the research and need for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

History

Motorcycles as transportation have been used since the early 1900's. Wealthy Americans bought motorcycles as recreation and only a few people could really afford them. It wasn't until after World War Two that a culture began to form around it. After the men came back from campaigns overseas they bought bikes and began to ride with loose groups of friends. Motorcycle racing became popular and bike clubs were formed to race. Motorcyclists still remained a part of the larger culture while motorcycling.

The integration within the larger culture began to change as men interested in the subculture started to define themselves by the biking community. Motorcycling became not only transportation but also a way of life. "His identity is tied into biking. He reads the biker rags, studies the specs of the new bikes, schemes to own them, and spends much of his life involved in bike business." (Joans, 2001 p.165) It wasn't until the incident at Hollister that motorcyclist or bikers split from the larger culture and became a distinct group of people.

A large group of motorcycle racers arrived in Hollister, California July 3rd, 1947 weekend. Most of the racers started to drink and the motorcycle event got out of hand. Journalists from around the area came in, took pictures of drunken bikers and bikes. Allegations of rape surfaced and the photographs were splashed across the papers of America. The unruly dangerous biker had been born.

More newspaper articles were written about the menace of the raging motorcyclist, fictional deviant outlaw motorcycle movies were made and the image of motorcycling started to change. In 1967 Hunter Thompson wrote of his experiences with the Hell's

Angels and the outlaw biker with his excessive lifestyle was became a part of the popular culture.

The biker mystique exists because of this beginning. This set Harley riders apart from other motorcycle riders. "Somehow, I felt among the anointed when on the Harley, even as the quicker Japanese bikes scooted by on the open road. I was of the mindset that offered a different perception of life." (Yates, 1999)

Motorcycle clubs

Motorcycle clubs changed after Hollister with groups of men forming clubs with emblems on their backs called patches. These patches separated bikers into distinct groups, which shaped the behavior of the individual who joined.

To discuss motorcycle clubs it is necessary to define subculture, "Forming in their combination a functioning unity, which has an integrated impact on the participating individual." (Arnold, 1970, p. 32) For example a man interested in a club will ride with the club to learn how to conform to the club's norms and values. Some clubs really like to ride well together while other clubs don't really ride together at all. These norms and values of riding shape the individual's thinking about the club.

Motorcycle clubs are more than just riding motorcycles. They are distinct groups who have their own rules and rituals with variation between clubs. Some clubs allow families to be involved and other clubs are for men only. This is just one example with each club having their own distinct personality. Also M/C clubs are a life commitment. Uncommitted men do not survive the prospecting or initiation period. Through this initiation period potential members conform to the group and through this conformity the individual becomes a new person.

The term motorcycle outlaw was defined by the American Motorcycle Association to describe rebellious motorcyclists who defy their rules. (Reynolds, 2000) There is pride connected to the nonconformist motorcyclist. Thompson in his book describes it as “Most outlaw bikers wear the one percent patch which means that they are proud to be a part of the alleged one percent of riders whom the AMA refuses to claim.” (p. 9, 1967)

They are proud to be unclaimed and the motorcycle gives them their personal identity. “For the outlaw, the motorcycle is the focal point in his life, the central purpose of his being.” (Hopper and Moore, 1983)

This self-identifier of outlaw biker equips the man with long standing values, behaviors and symbols. (Wolf, 1991, p.33) As was discussed earlier about the term subculture the bikers will identify himself less with the greater society and more with the biker subculture that he has chosen.

Sober Motorcycle clubs

Sometimes in the course of the outlaw motorcyclist lives they have drank alcohol and used drugs to the extent that they developed substance abuse problems. These bikers after completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation can no longer participate in outlaw activities. New groups are formed of these ex outlaws which are called sober motorcycle clubs. Sober motorcycle clubs have restricted membership to members who do not drink alcohol or use drugs. These clubs still have the same outlaw attitudes without the outlaw behaviors. See Figure 4.

Furthermore, this researcher had some previous experience with these groups which allowed the researcher access to their organizations. This was invaluable since these groups

are difficult to approach and suspicious of outsiders, which this researcher will discuss in greater detail in the method section of this paper.

In this paper sober motorcycle clubs were observed with members from two clubs interviewed. This research will increase our understanding of this subculture and will open other areas of future research. This piece will also be of interest to subculture studies because of the isolated nature of this group

In addition in this paper this researcher will describe the methods of data collection, data analysis and further work that can be done to better understand this culture.

Personal Lens

First I need to discuss my background in reference to this work. My husband was a member of one of these sober clubs for ten years and I rode and participated in the club functions for six of those years. See Figure 6. This previous experience with the members and the lifestyle opened doors that would have been closed otherwise. "One of the reasons that outlaw bikers have been studied little is that they do not take kindly to social scientists or to anyone who wishes to observe or question them." (Hopper and Moore, 1983, p.58)

Several members expressed a reluctance to speak with me until the President of each club explained to the interviewee my past involvement with the sober motorcycle club. Furthermore to prove myself to the interviewee I discussed past events that I had been involved in and my husband's past involvement. This seemed to quiet the reluctance of the interviewee and allowed them to speak with me about their experiences and the club.

My previous experience also helped me to understand the workings of the group and the interactions between club members and other clubs. This was important for reasons that will be discussed in the section on modeling of behavior or prospecting. "In order to study

them, one must be involved with gang members in some way that allows interactions with them.” (Hopper and Moore, 1983, p. 58)

My past experience also was used in formulating areas in which the study extended such as women’s roles and the experience of riding to runs. “Through his own experiences, general knowledge, or reading, and the stories of others, the sociologist can gain data on other groups that offer useful comparisons.” (Glaser and Straus, 1967, p.67) My lived experience helped to understand the people and the culture that they lived in.

Furthermore little work had been done with how these people had begun the lifestyle or how that lifestyle was learned. Previous work by Wolf (1991) and others discuss group dynamics such as in-group/out-group formations, prospecting or joining and women’ place in club life but most of the research focused on deviance within those relationships.

This research will increase our understanding of how individuals choose roles, the formulation of those roles and how they reinforce their choice by opposition to the role choice by the larger culture.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative ethnographic case study methods employing participant observation with structured interviewing was used in this research. Ethnography was chosen so that the researcher could reenter the subculture and participant as a lived experience. Ethnography is a representation of lived experience that cannot be duplicated completely because the people and events are constantly changing. (Bishop 1999) All interviews and observations were conducted between November of 2000 and July of 2001.

Why a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative Methodology is “research that produces descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior.” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 5) This researcher was interested in the perspective of the group members of the culture. “The phenomenologists is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective. He or she examines how the world is experienced.” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p.2) Qualitative analysis allows for participants to engage the researcher in their life experiences and allows for deeper understanding of the social interactions of the culture.

Qualitative methods was also used because as Glaser and Straus discuss, “qualitative research is, more often than not, the end product of research within a substantive area beyond which few research sociologists are motivated to move; and because qualitative research is often the most adequate and efficient way to obtain the type of information required and to contend with the difficulties of an empirical situation.” (1967, p.18) This researcher wanted to understand the culture from the perspective of the members and this required qualitative methods not quantitative questionnaire format.

The sample consisted of these two motorcycle clubs because of this researcher’s past

involvement with the groups. In qualitative research access is important, “The ideal research setting is one in which the observer obtains easy access, establishes immediately rapport with informants, and gathers data directly related to the research interests.” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p.19)

Why a Grounded Theory Approach?

There are a number of methodological approaches that can be used for qualitative research. This researcher studied specific groups and wanted the data to describe the actual interactions instead of predicting happening in these groups. “The methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests.”(Straus, 1987, p.5)

This researcher wanted the study to form naturally without preconceived theories that would make the data fit the theory. Grounded theory methodology allows the theories to emerge from the study as the data was collected. This was accomplished through Induction, deduction and verification of the data as it was being collected. In the induction phase hypotheses are both provisional and conditional. (Straus, 1987, p.12) This researcher had a structured question interview format but found the interviewees were reluctant to answer formal questions. Since grounded theory was utilized the interview process was changed to allow a more natural conversational interview.

Through following the deduction part of grounded theory this researcher was able to change the original theoretical direction as the data was collected. Review of each interview revealed new questions, which formulated a different research focus.

As the work continued and saturation was achieved through the interviewing process

the theory formed itself. Therefore grounded theory with its more open methodology allowed the study to change as the theory changed. Grounded theory is “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data” (Straus and Corbin, 1990, p.23)

Description of my Interviewing Techniques

Qualitative ethnographic case study methods employing participant observation with structured interviewing was used in this project. As stated in my discussion of grounded theory the interviewing was more of leading conversation with the participant also structuring the interview by going into areas outside of the study's interests. Questions were generated from my prior experiences and the literature review. All interviewees signed a consent form and both club presidents signed consent forms for the observation of the groups.

The interviewing process changed over the course of the study from a rigid questionnaire form to a more informal conversational format. This was due to the participant's reluctance to answer direct questions. An informal format worked better and allowed the participant to relax then the information the research was seeking was disclosed. All interviews were taped with the contributor's consent and each tape was then transcribed.

Questions asked during the initial interviewing process where general background questions about participant, their club involvement, their view of society and how they became involved with the club. Most interviews veered off into other areas as the participant shared information that they thought was relevant to my work.

Description of My Sampling Techniques

Participants were selected by interviewing the motorcycle club Presidents who

referred this researcher to other members of the group. Presidents of the clubs were used as gatekeepers of the organization. Straus and Glaser discuss the importance of gatekeepers, “Participant observers usually gain access to organizations by requesting permission from those in charge.” (1967, p.20.)

Furthermore it was important to clear my research with the President of each group so that the members would participate with me. “You want to convince gatekeepers that you are a non threatening person who will not harm their organization in any way.” (Straus and Glaser 1967, p. 20)

Presidents then were used to employ snowball sampling. “Start with a small number of people, win their trust, and ask them to introduce you to others.” (Straus and Glaser 1967, p.24) Club Presidents then provided this researcher with a list of interviewees that they had discussed the research with. All interviewed club members were male since membership is restricted to men. This was found to be true in other research. Hopper and Moore’s participants were described as “generally male between 21 and 45” (1983, p.58). This would describe the average participant in this study.

Participant observation was used in this study. “Research that involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected.” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p.15) This researcher was an active participant who engaged in long motorcycle trips and campouts with the research subjects. “ Observation was conducted at club meetings, club functions, club motorcycle runs and in club member’s homes.

Field notes were kept after each event. Notes were not taken during the activity to insure the natural behavior of the participants. “If they knew how closely they were going to

be watched, most people would feel self conscious in your presence.” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p.25) The few times that this researcher took notes at club meetings, the members agreed that this was acceptable and it was done discreetly.

Description as my role as researcher

I held a special position as outsider in this study. As a woman I could not participate fully in any of the activities since the clubs are restricted to men. In addition natural female interaction at a club function is restricted to socializing with other women and observing men interaction. For me to blend with the group I had to take on the female role which is not an active participant of male interaction. This permitted me to be a natural observer, which allowed the men to forget the research I was conducting.

Description of Participants

In the group Dry Runners, five people were interviewed out of ten members and in the group Sober and Free, three members were interviewed out of seven members. More people were interviewed in group Dry Runners because it was a larger group and the members were more willing to participant in this study. All interviewees were between the ages of 26-45. All members of Group Sober and Free and Group Dry Runners were observed in this study by this researcher at campground activities and club meetings.

Sober and Free

Jim
James
Phil

Dry Runners

Ralph
Jerry
Dennis
Shel
Tom

Activities observed had many different participants with some members from out of

state. At one event there were three hundred people attending so this researcher will not discuss every person attending each event. At these club activities the researcher stayed with the research group and watched their interactions more than other clubs or participants. This researcher tried to limit her observations to the research groups, which at times was difficult due to the large number of people.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

There was countless ways to examine the data collected. As this researcher was reviewing the data a pattern emerged. In grounded theory the use of analysis serves to assist qualitative researchers in generating theories. Theories that are grounded in the respondents answers to interviews and the research interest. “(a) Initially identifying key concepts, (b) grouping these key concepts together to form what they would term subcategories, (c) distinguishing and classifying the attributes and characteristics of each subcategory and (d) developing a ‘story line’ or ‘core category’ around which the sub categories will orbit and inevitably function to advance a grounded theory.” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.30)

As this researcher reviewed the transcripts using grounded theory as my methodology, themes or subcategories began to emerge. These themes were four areas or key concepts, which were: role development, role choice reinforcement, in-group (bike clubs) and out group (non-members involved in motorcycling). Attributes of subcategories are listed as properties with the all groupings leading to the hypothesis in the conclusion. For clarity purposes each property is discussed before the interviewee’s comments. After interviewee’s comment, interpretation through theory will be discussed.

The theories that will be discussed are: sex roles, reference groups and initiation theory.

Subcategory #1 The role

Properties

- (A) What were their first impressions?
- (B) How did they choose this role?
- (C) Current impressions of role.
- (D) How do the club members maintain the role?
- (E) Could they imagine ending the role?

A. What were their first impressions?

Most of the interviewees could remember the first time they saw a biker or the first time the role really impacted them. Specifically many of the member's impressions described the image that was attractive. They admired the person on the bike. These first impressions were vital for the later choices they made in their lives. See Figure 7.

Ralph "I looked out the window one day, and there was a guy sitting on one. He just looked happy."

James "My grandpa had one. He was a cop. He never rode a police bike that I know of. But he always had a motorcycle."

Jim "He was quite a bit older than I was. He had an old panhead dresser that I seen him ride."

Dennis "Yeah a few older guys had choppers."

James "When I was 13 or maybe before that, there was this old guy that lived down the street from us. He was a member of the Outlaws. I hung around those guys and watched them.

Most of the interviewees when discussing the first time they saw a biker they expressed a strong attraction to the image or the role. They used references like "he looked free" and he seemed "happy". No one this researcher interviewed discussed this image in reference to a woman. This image was a male ideal. Barry Mayson in his book *Fallen Angel* summaries the masculine image of bikers, "they had real brotherhood and excitement, they had real life. Freedom." (p.10, 1982)

Specifically when discussing freedom the men in this study are referring to the masculine image. For this reason these men looked to the biker image as a reference group

for masculinity. Sherif discusses this in his reference group theory, “Those groups to which the individual relates himself as a part or to which he aspires to relate himself psychologically.” (Coser and Rosenberg, 1964, p.273) The man who aspires to be a biker begins to align his beliefs with the reference group which is bikers. His conception of who he is as a man is what the biker’s in the group perceived what a man is.

Furthermore biker masculinity is similar to Latin Machismo which Lancaster explains in his article “Machismo is not primarily a means of structuring power relations between men and women. It is a means of structuring power between and among men.” (Adams and Savranz, 2002) Men in these clubs are more concerned with the response from other men in the club than the women they socialize with. Acceptance by the reference group is very important and being a “man” or masculine is very important.

Men talking about bikes and the culture are also constructing their masculine reality as a group. Karen Walker discusses this in her article, “Discussion of sports, for instance, is one obvious other way men construct their masculinity.” (Kimmel and Messner, p.376, 2001) Men in this study talk about the bikes but they are really establishing a framework of masculinity that the reference group agrees separates men from women.

This masculine framework can be summarized by Robert Brannon’s four rules of American manhood: 1. No Sissy Stuff: Men can never do anything that remotely suggests femininity. 2. Be a Big Wheel: Manhood is measured by power, wealth, and success. 3. Be a Sturdy Oak: Manhood depends on emotional reserve. 4. Give em Hell: Exude an aura of manly daring and aggression. Go for it. Take risks. (Kimmel and Messner, p. 541, 2001) Real bikers are not feminine, they show their masculinity by their motorcycles and they ride hard.

B. How did they choose this role?

Each interviewee after the first impression chose this role as their ideal image or role.

Consequently the bike was a necessary part of fulfilling the biker role so most interviewees discussed the first Harley as the defining moment. For some of the interviewees fulfilling the image took time and money to fulfill the ideal.

Shel "I was always a want to be for a long time. I drove truck for a long time and I gave people that I wannabe look for a long time. I had a want to be attitude. I was a look a like or something. I didn't ride but I always sat from a barstool imagining that I would ride."

James "But as soon as I could I bought a Harley. I was 24. It took that long to get one. It was a 75 Sportster. But I was proud of it. The first thing I did was tear it all apart and make it the way I wanted it. It's something that you want to personalize."

Jerry "To me the modern day biker is like the old cowboys. Bikers got labeled outlaws. I was always into westerns when I was growing up. I didn't really listen to rock and roll music until I was ten or eleven. Mom and dad always listened to country. Always watched the old John Wayne movies. It was just the freedom of the open range and the freedom of the open road."

As the men look to the biker reference group for their masculine role or image they begin to shape their lives to achieve it. They learn to conform to the image, "Social conformity usually denotes conformity to the norms and expectations current in the individual's own membership group." (Coser and Rosenberg, 1964 p.276) Potential bikers purchase motorcycle magazines, hang out with other bikers and immerse themselves in the culture so they can learn the norms and expectations of the reference group.

Furthermore the learning of the reference group can be observed at any Harley shop

or Harley motorcycle gathering. Men that have recently purchased a bike will also buy the right clothes so they fit into the group. They will learn how to talk the language so they can assimilate and they will learn norms relevant to the group. However this is just a beginning, true reference group membership requires commitment that many new owners are unprepared or unwilling to do.

Learning the reference group preferences defines the culture so that all people within in the culture share the same reality. “We build an identity and make ourselves secure through knowing what our proper code of behavior is when relating to others.” (Kottak, 1982, p.10)

C. Current impressions of Role “image”

As should be expected most of the interviewees still responded favorably to the biker image. In fact the reinforcement from their peers helped to strengthen their choice of biker image. Many of the members in the interviewees discussed their club involvement when discussing the role. There seemed to be reassurance that they shared a common impression of the role within their social group.

Jerry “To me, being a biker is having the freedom of choice. Being able to enjoy getting on a motorcycle with a bunch of other guys that have the same type of values and morals. It’s just the freedom of the road. Of getting on the bike. Being able to get on the bike whenever, and not be ashamed of it. I’ve seen a lot of doctors and lawyers that can afford brand-new Harley’s get them and become weekend bikers. To me a biker is, if they’re going to go from where they live to a function, you get on your bike and you ride it there and you ride it back.”

Ralph “They don’t give a shit what other people thinks of their opinion, so they keep it to

themselves. We couldn't have gotten the reputation we got if we talked about it. It's kind of like Robin Hood and Jesse James. Those boys are as hot as legend makes them."

Shel "Yep. I like my long hair, and I like my tattoos. I like the cockiness about my smile sometimes. Because I have nothing to fear today. I don't do people harm.

James "A biker is somebody that you can trust. Somebody that you are not afraid to talk to about certain things and be open with them. And most people don't think that. Bikers to me are people that know what they want, got what they want and are happy with it. They like riding all for the same reasons. I don't think you'll ever talk to a biker that didn't like to get out on the highway. Now just because you own a Harley Davidson don't mean you fall into that category. The ones that buy the bike and let it sit in the garage as an investment, you figure them guys out pretty quick."

Dennis "Yes it makes me feel good to be out in the wind and riding. It's a deep feeling within myself."

Dennis "I guess there is a little romance involved."

Dennis "I think people are badly deceived by bikers. I think bikers are the most honest people there really is. Maybe they shouldn't have been born in this era."

The interviewee has assimilated into the group and has found himself in relation to his reference group. His social role is fixed so that he knows what is expected of him and has found acceptance. "A person who is needed by a social circle and whose self possesses the qualities required for the role for which he is needed has a definite social status."

(Znaniecki, p.365, Coser and Rosenberg, 1964,)

The man has found his masculine image in being a biker and has found a reference group which will reaffirm what a man is. "We use groups to evaluate ourselves and to

acquire attitudes, values, beliefs and norms. Groups used in this way are called reference groups.” (Shepard, p.106, 1990)

D. How does the club member maintain the role?

Maintaining the biker role happens by riding their motorcycle, hanging with like peers and reaffirming that they are different or unique. Most maintain that you don’t have to join a club to be a biker but many couldn’t imagine themselves without the club.

Shel “I have a lot of respect for the people that I actually ride with.”

Tom “My motorcycle is an extension of me. When I’m on it. The last couple of years I’ve had problems keeping that old panhead up. If I have to drive and the rest of the guys are riding then I feel a little lesser than but basically I’d rather be out on a bike than sitting in a cage.”

Shel “I hang with a different group of people. The people I hang with for the most part are people that ride.”

There is a comfort for the interviewee in being within their reference group. This is discussed in Mead’s “generalized other”. Generalized other is integrating conceptions of norms, values, and beliefs of one’s community or society within the individual as a generalized referent or source. The biker subculture becomes a referent source for norms and values that the biker starts to internalize as an individual’s norms and values. “The social group provides the individual with attitudes and opinions that he can engage with to ground him in his interactions with the larger society.” (Coser and Rosenberg, 1970)

This researcher observed on several occasions the bonding that occurs within the group of men. Each patch holder hugs an arriving member and they tease each other a lot. At the time of this study Jerry was making belt buckles with the club symbol on it. No one

member ever praised him openly but this researcher observed him feeling accepted by the club members which are an example of values from the generalized other being internalized. If the club members think that action or opinion is okay then the new members acquired this norm or value as a part of their individual frame of reference.

Moreover most acceptances of members by other members are not overt. Teasing, helping each other and hanging out together are a subtle grounding to reaffirm group ideals.

E. Could they imagine ending the role?

Ending the role with this group would entail selling the bike. The bike has become so much a part of them that they could not picture themselves without a motorcycle. Even after selling the bike or losing it, the image or role is still relevant to him or her and will do whatever it takes to get another one. When asked what it would be like to not have a bike the answer was emphatically negative.

Shel "No."

Ralph "No. Probably a more unfortunate one."

James "No when I had my accident I didn't have a bike for awhile and that just drove me nuts."

Tom "That would be like cutting off my arm or something. I'd have to really be in dir straits. I'd have to be too old to ride it. And then I might not sell it. The bike means quite a bit to me."

Tom "There has been a few trips we did this year where I had to drive. It did make me feel like less of a man."

None of the participants that were interviewed could imagine either not riding anymore or quitting the club. Both commitments were too meaningful to the men to end.

Their status within the club and their sex role choice were too internalized. The sex role of biker was constantly reinforced by others in the group through jokes about feminine men or encouragement of masculine activities like working on motorcycles or riding long distances.

“The transition from novice motorcyclist to Righteous Biker involves a man coming to view his motorcycle as an extension of himself.” (Wolf, 1991, p.43,)

Subcategory #2 Reinforcement of choice.

Properties

- (A) Societal Adversity
- (B) Law Enforcement conflict as reinforcement
- (D) Negative interaction with in-group members as reinforcement of image

A. Societal Adversity

Treatment by the out-group, which is society, reinforced the individual's decision to choose the image. “Insofar as the new subculture represents a new status system-sanctioning behavior tabooed or frowned upon by the larger society, the acquisition of status within the new group is accompanied by a loss of status outside the group.” (Arnold, 1970, p.105) Negative interactions with society reinforce the elite biker image.

Shel “Because you try to be open and honest with people and you get fucked.”

Ralph “I’ve had motels turn their lights off, and suddenly turn on the no vacancy. 16 cottages with no cars in sight, but there all full. I was flying, so it may have been the bike, or it may have been the colors.”

Shel “They look at me with a scowl. People that I meet have a different impression of me. Because I have tattoos and I have long hair. And I believe I have a different set of values than some people do. I don’t know.”

James “From the time we walked into that Goddamn restaurant until the time we left, you could just feel the way people were looking at you and thinking.”

Ralph “These people were explaining bikers to somebody else.(That’s the way you talk to a biker. Because we all know how they are.)”

Discussion of in-group and out-group reference groups is necessary when talking about clubs and society. Sumner discusses in-group and out-group placement as the in-group is “us” and the out-group is everyone else. (Coser and Rosenberg, 1964, p.270) The biker views everyone outside his reference group as the out-group which includes the larger society.

This researcher on several occasions had witnessed special treatment by other society members. Camp grounds did not want us camping at them. “Status within the subculture may result in sanctioning of behavior by the larger society.” (Arnold, 1970, p.105)

B. Law enforcement conflict as reinforcement

Specifically treatment from law enforcement was cited as an example of others treating them different. See Figure 2.

Ralph “I made a 2400-mile trip to get pulled over 10 miles north of Des Moines. I was pulled over for loud pipes. And they weren’t as loud when they pulled us over, as they were when they went by. And they searched us for weapons. Went so far as to search my dirty socks. They like any opportunity to piss with you. Been pulled over, and this and that ain’t right. And you’re gonna have to do this to that. Just bullshit. And sometimes I think they’re scared, and want to know who you are and where you’re going.”

Shel “They just give me a ration of shit. The first time I was ever pulled over I didn’t know the laws like they are today. They made me empty my saddlebags, made me empty my tool pouch, pretty near made me take off almost all my frickin clothes, and patted me down. More or less stripped searched my bike. Yeah they think I’m an outlaw or something.”

Ralph “I went through Wyoming and he (the highway patrolman) hadn’t seen me going through that stretch of road before. The highway patrolman must have looked at me and thought-he don’t look like your normal Yellowstone tourist. Better pull him over.”

Tom “I had a cop one-time pull me over drag me out of the car in front of my kid and start frisking me. He then asked if he could search my car. At the time I figured what the hell. He comes up beside me and said “Oh, we are keeping pretty clean, huh?” He said this in front of my kid and I know that to an average citizen that wouldn’t have happened.”

This researcher had experienced law enforcement interaction that reinforced the out group mentality. On a trip to southern Iowa this researcher was stopped by law enforcement at a road stop and a drug dog was sent around us to sniff for drugs. Questions were asked about our destination and where we had come from. No drugs were found so we were allowed to go on our way. Even knowing that this should be expected because of our appearance this researcher became resentful of the treatment and of the law enforcement officers. Arnold discusses these feelings by describing “hostile and contemptuous images of those groups whose enmity they have earned.” (Arnold, 1970, p.105)

C. Negative interaction with in group members as reinforcement of image

Peer pressure from their club helps group members to reinforce the image because in- group members are constantly pressuring each other to conform. This researcher witnessed on several occasions prospects being corrected by patch holders about proper conduct or club rules while riding.

James “Here I had about \$11,000 on that bike in insurance money and I didn’t rush right out and buy another one. Of course I caught flack about that. Because some of them think that the bike is number one.”

Reference group opinions are valued highly and negative responses from the group also shape the individuals behavior to conform more closely to the reference group.

“Members of a group use one another as reference points for self-image and for establishing the relationship of self to others.” (Arnold, 1970, p.139)

This researcher witnessed several reinforcement of image or role within this study.

One patch holder was teased on many occasions for washing to often. Another patch holder’s prowess with women was discussed openly with admiration.

Subcategory 3 Identify the in group

- A) Selective or elite
- (B) Membership requirements
- (C) Learning in group rules-prospecting
 - a) Asking to prospect
 - b) Learning how to be a member-initiation
 - c) Acceptance by patched members or being patched
- (D) How to be a member in good standing
- (E) Acceptance into the group or culture

A. Selective or elite

Members of the in-group or the club emphasized several times to the researcher that they had to be solicited by other men to join. They did not solicit others but waited for potential prospects (members in training) to ask to join. This soliciting by others reinforces their decisions to choose this role or image. If others want to join the lifestyle then the whole group must OK the potential club members.

Ralph “In the first place, they have to want to. We don’t go and ask them. If they show an interest, we invite them along. And if they decide they want to be a part of it, they ask.”

Ralph “While they are doing odd jobs, see how their attitude holds up. If it’s shit, is he going to be that way then on down the road? If they were willing to go beyond the bounds that they would go for something else. If they are willing to do things to belong to our

organization that they wouldn't do normally there is a level of commitment there. When you have a 300-pound guy listening to a 140-pound guy giving him a ration of shit, you made it."

James "I wait for someone to approach me. Attraction rather than promotion. We don't go out and drum up members. We feel if they come to us then they are really interested."

"A club offers a social framework of biker activities and a sense of community that provide the biker with positive feedback about his developing identity and support his personal philosophy of biking as an acceptable alternative lifestyle." (Wolf, 1991, p.59,)

B. Membership requirements

To ensure that the membership stays exclusive there are a list of requirements to meet. Each club had a list of requirements that potential members had fulfill. A prospect had to own a Harley or British bike, be sober a year and be willing to go on motorcycle trips commonly referred to as runs. Moreover membership is restricted to white male bikers.

Dennis "You have to have a year's sobriety to begin with. And we don't recruit. We really don't make them beg. We might throw subtle hints at them."

Shel "They have to have an American made motorcycle."

James "We go by the philosophy that if you want what we have to offer, then we're probably the best bet. But we don't go looking for people."

C. Learning in group rules-prospecting

A positive way that this group reinforces self-image or role is by teaching prospects or potential members the norms and values of the club. "Transmission of the system from the initiated to the novice is a group wise process participated in by all members of the specialty association with the initiate." (Arnold, 1970, p.25). There are three steps to prospecting-

soliciting the group to join, learning how to be a member and acceptance by patched members or being patched.

a) Asking to prospect

Potential prospects approach the club at an event and just hang around with them.

Hanging around entails joining in conversation with members and helping to fix bikes if one is broke down. This time allows club members to get to know the person and also allows the potential prospect opportunities to get to know the club members. When the potential feels like the group accepts him then he may ask to prospect.

Dennis “We make them ask usually. Or they’ll ask what it takes to join. And we tell them, and if they seem interested we’ll give them a rocker to wear and then they prospect.”

Ralph “The main thing is to make sure they are committed enough to stick it out.”

Shel “I don’t ask people to prospect for us, they have to come to a patch holder and ask to prospect after they have one year’s sobriety.

Tom “ This guy I know asked to join. He came over and started talking with us. We went to Kansas and he met us in Des Moines. We (the whole club and him) took a couple of trips together and he decided he liked what he seen and asked what it took to join.”

Tom “I didn’t know that I was suppose to ask them. I was kind of waiting around for someone to ask me. And then it kind of got to me and I blurted out what’s it going to take for me to join this club.”

The potential who would like to prospect must give up his prior identity and take on the identity shaped by the club. “Modern day novitiates must deny and transcend their prior and separate identities before they are allowed to join the tribe.” (Raphael, 1988, p.12)

Much like the primitive societies discussed in Raphael’s (1988) book these men are

reshaped to think more like the larger group. A prospect is assigned a club sponsor who is responsible for this man. The sponsor's job is to teach the prospect the proper behavior and attitude to have, the new identity.

b) Learning how to be a member-initiation

Learning how to be a club member happens on club runs, club meeting and socializing at club member's houses. These activities are important since this teaches the prospect proper behavior within the club. See Figure 5.

Tom "They learn from their club sponsor. You need to do what needs to be done. And it's up to your sponsor to let you know what you're supposed to be doing."

Shel "They are told what to do at club functions. And they're asked to do things as long as they are not illegal, immoral or how do I want to say it, out of the question."

James "If you watch it long enough you're going to figure it out. And if you're lucky, you'll learn it that way rather than the hard way."

James "You don't hit on another brother's wife. You don't scream and yell at somebody else's wife. You tell the brother later to shut them up but you don't say anything."

Dennis "We put them through little humiliating things. Just make them humble. It kind of slows them down a little bit. Really strengthens your ties."

Tom "There's definitely some testing. If you ask somebody to get you a cup of coffee and they fly off the handle then you pretty much know for starters that he has no humility. And number two he doesn't want it really bad. Our colors, it's more than a patch on your back. It's a sign of brotherhood. It's like a piece of me. So you have to really want it. Because if you don't really want it, then you have no business being here. If you don't want it and you do get your patch then the patch isn't going to mean nothing to you."

An initiation ritual redefines the physical, social and spiritual existence of its participants. (Raphael, 1988) Prospects are taught loyalty to the group through this process so they begin to identify more with this group than larger society. This researcher observed several examples of this initiation process. One man was the official coffee provider. His main job was to make sure that no patched member's coffee cup ran out of coffee. The patched members would occasionally dump their cup so they could yell at the man to get them some damn coffee. Prospects were always on alert to provide for the patched members.

An example of this initiation ritual was described to this researcher by a member of a newly disbanded group. Prospects were taken by the group to a prior chosen town. In this town they were told to disrobe and put on a bed sheet. In this sheet they were told to buy each club member a pop from the local convenience store in what ever manner they could. Wearing the sheets the prospects rode their motorcycles to the store and bartered with the cashier for the pop. The prospect had to remember exactly which pop was for which person and if they succeeded they were patched into the group. The newly patched prospect would then triumphantly lead the group back to the camp ground.

c) Acceptance by patched members or being patched

Acceptance into the group is going from out group member to in-group with its privileges and status. No longer does the biker just hope to join the club, he is now a full patch holder. The new patch holder can now give orders to future prospects and join all club functions.

Shel "I said I don't know anybody that rides clean and sober and I don't know what to do.

And he said that he knew a bunch of guys that ride clean and sober. He said that I should

come to a club meeting someday and he would introduce you to all of them. So I went one Sunday to a club meeting with him and I've been around these people ever since then."

The club allows the man to have a structured group that he can relate to and feel like he belongs. "By joining a group we move beyond our individual limitations and share in the collective power of all men." (Raphael, 1988, p.95)

D. How to be a member in good standing

Being part of the group entails riding with them and going to all of the meetings but it is also sharing the same attitudes and thinking of the group. Members develop close relationships that they enjoy through sharing common attitudes.

Ralph "It seems like you get to know them more than you get to know your other friends. If he has problems, he doesn't have to advertise you know that. There is a lot more feeling going on. We're almost to the 'if you don't get it, you're not going to. And if you do, I couldn't tell you anyway."

Tom "Me and Ralph were tight right off the get. I knew what I wanted right off the bat."

"By conformity to the behavior system, the initiate acquires a status within the group and a position within the community." (Arnold, 1970, p.25) The new patch holder belongs to a group of men which helps him maintain his image of masculinity. No longer is he searching for acceptance in society. He has found his place where he belongs.

E. Acceptance into the group or culture

Club membership is conditional. If a club member drinks or uses controlled substances then they loose their membership. Loss of membership is more than the patch since they would also be loosing their peer group interactions.

Dennis "Being in this sober club that was like my door to stay clean. Because I don't think I could have done it without these guys. To be totally honest with you, A. A. works for a lot

of people, N.A. works for a lot of people. It has actually helped me a lot too. But not as much as riding with these guys. This is what really helped me.”

Ralph “If somebody needs something or somebody is broken down in Timbuktu or whatever and you makes a phone call. You know it’s a turn around thing.”

Ralph “A good pack of bikes is like a pack of fighter jets. When this group moves, it moves as a group.”

Acceptance means fellowship with the group. Wolf explains this fellowship in his book as “The man who earns his colors becomes a member of an elite group that struts with a high profile: on a personal level he transcends the ordinary and the mundane in the search for self.” (Wolf, 1991, p.343) The patch holder is not just a solo rider, he is now recognized by the biker culture as belonging to specific group. This recognition involves status that changes the interaction of other bikers with him. He is now responsible for other men in the group and they are responsible for him.

For example during this research a member of Dry Runners was seen wearing his patch into a bar during a bike event. The rest of the club was upset because Dry Runners are recognized as being sober and have a special status within the outlaw culture because of being sober. This action threatened their special status and the member was reprimanded by the club.

Subcategory #4 identifying the out group

Properties

- (A) What is the out-group?
- (B) Femininity not allowed-only men
- (C) Identification of out group-wannabes.
- (D) People in between-poser
- (F) Treatment of out-group members as reinforcement of choice

A. What is the out-group?

Reinforcement of in-group bonding also occurs when the in group has identified

people who do not belong. This could be the regular society or law enforcement but there is a special distinction for people who own bikes but are not bikers.

According to the men in this research the real bikers have made the full commitment and that separates them from the enthusiast/ wannabe/ bar rider. Furthermore ethnicity also plays a part as only whites can join a motorcycle club.

Ralph "The motor cycle enthusiast looks out the window in the morning. And it looks like rain. So he says to himself, "Damn. I really wanted to ride today." And a real biker looks out the window and it looks like rain and says, "All right! I get to wear my fuckin chaps!"

Ralph "I'm not saying a Hispanic couldn't join. A black guy wouldn't make it. There's a line that we didn't draw. Women can't join. She would be setting herself up for problems, which would drag us into problems."

Wolf in the Rebels also encountered this in his study as he became more assimilated into the culture he felt more distance with the larger society. "I grew to sense and share members distrust of outsiders." (Wolf, 1991, p.18,) The larger society is the out group because they do not share same norms and values as the club.

B. Femininity not allowed - only men

Bike club Sober and Free had women as members in the past but at the time of the study had no women members. In fact men in both groups expressed strong feelings about women membership. These motorcycle clubs were for men only. Women could be passengers and casual riders but they couldn't join and were discouraged from riding to club functions. This fits Brannon's traditional rules for manhood as discussed previously "No Sissy Stuff".

Shel "That's my business and my business only. I may speak to her, she may hear some

things but those are for my eyes only. It doesn't go any farther than me and her."

James "No. A woman cannot join the club. A man and a woman think two different ways.

At least that's the way I look at it. But I respect women."

Dennis "Well to me this is one thing and I'm not really a macho pig but this is a guy's club.

That's the way it is. It's more Neanderthal lifestyle. From the very beginning man has ruled the cave. And I'm not saying that is the best thing, but that's the way it's supposed to be.

And still to this day that's the way it's supposed to be. No matter how fucked up the man is.

It should be that way and the woman is second."

The sex role chosen by the men and reinforced by the group is always threatened by the involvement of the women in the group. First, women are not allowed to participate in any club meetings or club decisions. Secondly women are only allowed to sit in club meetings if they are invited by the men. Third women are not allowed to ask prospects to do anything and no man would ever ride on the back of a motorcycle if a woman was driving. Consequently bikers are men and feminine anything is considered soft, unmanly.

C. Identification of out group-wannabes

At every club event there were people who did not own or ride a Harley who hung out with the club members. For some the image or dressing like a biker was enough to fulfill the role and they never took the image all the way by buying a bike. This group was considered the wannabes. They want to be a biker. Wannabes also could be encountered anywhere that bikers traveled. Many times bikers were stopped and approached by others who are trying to impress them. These interactions by men who wish they were the patched bikers really flatters the members and reinforces they're choosing of their role.

Shel "When they carry things too far. They try to impress upon me that they have done this

and that. Why in the hell do they need to impress upon me that they have done this or done that? If they have done it, they should be okay with it themselves. I don't have any respect for wannabes."

James "Because they are trying to be somebody their not. And you can pick that up pretty easy."

Ralph "I've had people talk in gas stations that they had 1500 cc Sportster or 1200 cc

Triumphs. Like my uncle Billy Bob has a bike and it's a such and such. For some reason, some people go out of their way to talk to you."

Dennis "But I'm not going to walk up to somebody and say they are a phony, plastic yuppie fuckin biker. Even though it's written all over him. I'm pretty tactful about it. My best friend in Utah, if he sees someone with a Harley shirt on, he's like, "You got a Harley?"

Well no but I like them. Depending on how many beers he had in him, he might rip the shirt off them. Because they didn't deserve that shirt."

Tom "Usually you get a kid comes up to you or somebody that is a want to be and he tells you that he has a tore down 74 inch Sportster that's a 1969. Well they don't make a 74-inch Sportster then. I mean the first few words out of their mouth, you can tell whether they are or they aren't."

D. People in between-posers

The motorcycle enthusiast or "weekend warrior" as one interviewee labeled them is another category. They like the image but do not want to be a biker. These riders don't get "it". The in-group has less respect for this group than the wannabes because this group has the bike but not the commitment it takes to internalize the image.

Shel "I don't think they know what biking is about and what riding is about. Biking isn't just about going out and buying a \$30,000 motorcycle. I mean anybody can go out and buy a

\$30,000 motorcycle and put it on a trailer and haul it to Daytona or Sturgis and take it off the trailer and ride it around and look good and then put it back on the trailer and head home again. I don't think they know what it's about. They don't know the feeling of being at one with the world. The freedom of just going down the road for miles and miles."

James "These are the guys that are riding around and are trying to be something they're not, it seems to me to be a waste of time. They are trying to pick up on a life style that they don't even understand."

Dennis "Somebody will have a brand new Harley and they instantly think they are a biker. They get all the apparel and everything. And they might go 50 miles a year on it. And there is guys riding Honda Gold wings all over the country. But they think they're a biker because they have a Harley."

Ralph "A biker rode a bike when it wasn't popular. Sometimes he rode a bike because it wasn't popular. And these other guys are riding it because it's cool."

It takes more than owning the bike, the right clothes and knowing how to ride. The poser's commitment will be judged along with his perceived weakness. Men in these clubs can quickly tell who is a poser and who really lives the lifestyle. Men that live the lifestyle will allow the poser to hang out at their function but there is a distinction between the "biker" and the poser.

Ferrar also saw this in her study, "HOG rallies offer a pleasant alternative to hard core gatherings where the people can be kind of rough. At HOG rallies, doctors lawyers, and executives mingle comfortably with working-class "lifestyle bikers"." (Ferrar, 1996, p.69) Ferrar even recognizes the difference between dabbling in the culture and having it become a lifestyle by pointing out the difference between the lawyers and the working class. Lack

of full commitment is viewed as a weakness to club members and weakness is not masculine. HOG members who ride like Ferrar describes would not be considered the full commitment.

F. Treatment of out group members as reinforcement of choice

Club members sometimes will allow posers and wannabes to hang out with them. They will usually try to show these people that they are different or unique from them. Consequently the outsider may hang out with them but club members are different and the outsider has to prove himself.

James “This guy was one of those guys that woke up and decided he was going to be a biker and we stuck him in the middle of our group going 70 around curves. He isn’t around anymore.”

In addition to intimidating the out group member by riding, this researcher watched a poser approach a group of club members who had already judged him as not worthy of attention. The poser was carefully snubbed and most of the men acted like he wasn’t there. If the poser was really serious about wanting to get to know the members he would have done whatever it would have taken to prove himself to the club members. Showing his commitment to the culture by hanging out and trying to learn the culture earns more respect from club members than acting like the person is experienced.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As the interviews were being conducted and reviewed a pattern began to emerge from the data. Every subcategory and its properties could all be linked by an underlying theory of male masculinity. These men made these choices based on what they perceived as masculine role modeling. They chose the sex role biker because it was perceived as tough and free. They were interested in the club because these men also shared the same conception of masculine. They were especially comforted by the fact that they could keep the masculine image while being sober. Many of the participants in this study expressed a fear that when they became sober they would have to give up being a biker or being a “man”.

Women’s involvement in the clubs is restricted by the men into clearly defined roles which will not threaten their status within the group. In fact women are not allowed to join the group and they can only go on rides if they are invited by the patch holder. Consequently sex roles are carefully defined with group expectations of all participants’ behaviors. For example Club Dry Runners have a camp out Mother’s Day weekend in which the men cook breakfast for the women. None of the men cook outside of this one time a year event.

Most of the men in this study had rigid sex roles in the home. There was a clear cut division of labor. Primary responsibilities for the men was working and caring for the mechanical objects in the house. Women had child care and household work with many of the women also working outside of the home. This researcher never witnessed any of the men engaging in women’s work outside of the camp out meal. There were definite

perceptions of women's work and men's work.

However there were two men who lived alone that performed their own housework and cooking. They were not considered feminine because they did not have a woman to perform the work. No man that had a partner in the home performed their own housework.

Another sign of sex roles was the homophobic attitudes of the men in this study. Homosexual jokes were often made with some members simulating homosexual acts against other members to tease them. This researcher never witnessed a homosexual biker at any event unless it was a closeted person. Homosexuality would not be accepted within this subculture and could possibly lead to a violent reaction from the members.

Furthermore most of the men in this group had the respect of other club members and did not need to prove their masculinity to each other anymore. At most social function the club seemed relaxed with each other and more wary of outsiders. New comers to the campsite were welcomed but assessed before being fully accepted into the group. Acceptance by the presidents who were respected usually meant acceptance by all of the members.

Moreover these men had learned how to live the biker lifestyle without the drugs and alcohol that permeate the larger subculture. This is admirable for the simple fact that the culture is centered on alcohol consumption. Most biker functions have dry campgrounds which allow no alcohol for the sober community. These are exceptions to the larger gatherings and most sober bikers have made sobriety their top concern second to the biker culture.

Moreover these are warm, fun loving people once they have accepted you. They are loyal and will help each other if called. Most are very independent and are conservative in

their opinions which they keep closely guarded to outsiders. Therefore this researcher wanted to demystify the culture so that others could see them as people and not the image created by the larger society.

Further not all men who ride Harleys become a part of a club. Club membership is the full commitment that is not suitable for everyone. A man can ride and be a part of the culture without joining a club but he is missing out of the sense of brotherhood that these clubs provide.

Finally this research is an examination of two motorcycle clubs and their culture. Attitudes and perceptions of these men can be compared to the rest of the biker subculture but overgeneralizations should be avoided. These are unique groups of men who have shaped their identities around sober motorcycling and have found a reference group to relate to.

Further work that can be done in these areas is that women's roles and attitudes within the club could be studied. Women's attraction to bikers could be explored, bases for this attraction and women's relationships with other women could be studied. Women's conflict with other women in the club is also a subject that could be investigated. Further work with subculture looking at interactions with other clubs could be explored. Bikers lived experiences could also be another area of study. This could be done through journaling or having them write their life stories. A paper comparing bike clubs to fraternities and gangs is also another area that could be looked at.

Chapter 6

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Appendix Photos



Figure 1
Example of different
club patches



Figure 2
Example of law
enforcement interaction
while on the road



Figure 3
Example of sober
campout or run



Figure 4
Club
members
gathering for
a run



Figure 5
Stopping for
a break while
on the road



Figure 6
Researcher
shown with
bike and
kids



Figure 7
Example of
a chopper